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**France, Angela ORCID logoORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8308-4868> (2016) from Trails and Ways. Under the Radar.**

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France, A. (2016) 'Trails and Ways I, II, and III', *Under the Radar* No.16, pp 25 – 27.

*from* Trails and Ways

I

I used to think the cottage should be mine  
when I scrambled up the steep track  
which climbed from the pit behind

through beeches whose roots widen cracks  
in the stone beneath the hill's gaunt skin  
where clumps of hart's tongue lie like green rags.

I would have lived there, content within  
its squat walls with a dog at my heel  
and no sense then of how adults must live

between wage and want, and want and need.  
I stand at the fence to see the cottage again,  
my feet in the metallised litter of beech leaves

and my back to the hollow where trees and dense  
scrub hide the remains of iron plates  
that guided rumbling trams on a cabled ascent.

An old woman leans on the car-park gate,  
wiry hair springing from under her waxed hat,  
a grey-muzzled collie stands at her knee, another's laid

at her feet. She sees me looking and snaps  
a wink at me; *they tore it down once,*  
*for being in the way, every stone and scrap.*

She tells me her grandpa was amongst  
the men who marched from town  
*Up hill to down Dale,* whose response

to fences and blocked paths was to pound  
on walls, to harden hands and voices,  
to lead hundreds of feet over disputed ground.

## II. *Helix pomatia*

Hail, Creamy-shelled long-foot,  
antennae-questing rain-lover. You step lightly  
on this place; settled on the limestone slopes,  
sleeping deep in the tussocks through the day,  
showing yourself slowly, shyly, on dew-laden mornings.  
How carefully, carefully, you dug with your soft head  
to winter in the earth below frost-scarred grasses.  
Your shell lightens each year; it's spring  
and here you are, slowing my feet on the path  
across the grasslands, reminding  
me to watch where I tread.

### III

Don't climb the rock face in Wagon Quarry,  
where deep fissures divide limestone into boulders  
which could fall under a sparrow's foot or wing's flurry.

Take the scrubby side where a path twists round alder,  
hawthorn, seems to vanish under brambles,  
slips under scree but will take you over the shoulder

to the plain on the hilltop where the wind dandles  
grass from green to silver and fox-trails  
criss-cross under a wide sky while a kestrel untangles

air currents and waits for movement, a chance of prey.  
Bypass the iron-age mounds and take a left  
past Devil's Chimney on an incline built for rails,

steep and smooth for feet; dig heels into every dint and cleft  
to stay upright, down to Deadman's Quarry where stone slabs  
lay where they fell, and rolled, and came to rest.

Great cracks in the cliff-face suggest caves and trapped  
secrets to a child seeking fossils or beetles,  
asks how deep into the golden stone a crabwise

step might reach, while shadows of dusty people  
leave rusty iron protruding in mysterious shapes  
and scars on the stone from drum-drawn cables.